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ABSTRACT

Recent studies indicate that Americans have lost faith in public schools. Polls trace a steady decline of confidence in the educational system, a decline extending over the past two decades. The general trend masks two anomalies, however. First, several indicators associated with increased confidence in the schools are on the rise--students staying in school instead of dropping out, parents enrolling their children in public schools over private schools, and governments boosting financial outlays for public education. Second, poll respondents are more likely to express dissatisfaction with the nation's schools than with their own local schools. This essay explores ways of reconciling the contradictory evidence, argues that fundamental relationships of schools and public must be reexamined for a fuller understanding of the problem, and discusses areas where additional research could inform educational policy. When thinking about public confidence in education or talking about ways to boost education's institutional legitimacy, it is important to recognize the two distinctions outlined--the difference between the public's faith in schools and school systems and the difference between the perceptual and behavioral manifestations of that faith. Six figures and four tables are included. (Contains 49 references.) (LMI)

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THE STRUCTURE OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN EDUCATION

Tom Loveless*

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Abstract

Recent studies indicate that Americans have lost faith in public schools. Polls trace a steady decline of confidence in the educational system, a decline extending over the past two decades. The general trend masks two anomalies, however. First, several indicators associated with increased confidence in the schools are on the rise--students staying in school instead of dropping out, parents enrolling their children in public schools over private schools, governments boosting financial outlays for public education. Second, poll respondents are more likely to express dissatisfaction with the nation's schools than their own local schools. This essay explores ways of reconciling this contradictory evidence, argues that fundamental relationships of schools and public must be reexamined for a fuller understanding of the problem, and discusses areas where additional research could inform educational policy.

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Introduction

We have become inured to educational crisis. Daily, it seems, television reports another embarrassment of the American public school system. Newspapers discuss the latest dismal performance of U.S. students on a new international achievement test, a discussion that, as commentators rarely fail to point out, is written in prose that vast numbers of students cannot decode or comprehend. The few popular films or plays that even feature schools raise alienated educators to heroic stature; we learn that teachers must isolate themselves from the educational system before they can <u>really</u> teach. Academia does not stray far from this path. Leaf through a few current American education journals. Just below the academic jargon and the theoretical frameworks grows the seed of an intolerable idea, a profound dread that something has gone terribly wrong with our schools, something we might never be able to fix.

The deeper the crisis, the more fervent the defenders, and education still enjoys fervent defenders. Innumerable past educational crises have always brought them forth. And the public school system has always survived. Today, if you talk to one of these defenders and point out that this time things seem different, that this time education seems to have lost its fundamental currency with the public, you will probably get strong denials and powerful proclamations of the school's role in building democratic societies, healthy economies, and moral citizens. You might even hear some of the more recent uplifting cliches--that "it takes a whole village to raise a child," or

that "children are our nation's most precious resource," or that schools are "preparing a workforce for the twenty-first century," or that education now stresses "higher level thinking and problem solving, not rote learning." From all this talk, however, all the talk of villages, resources, new centuries, and thinking soaring into the stratosphere, one can take little comfort. These phrases bend words of trumpet and exhortation into a plea for what we want education to be, not an affirmation of what most people today believe it is. If pressed, even education's most ardent defenders admit that these cliches confirm more about the seriousness of education's contemporary predicament than they deny.

This paper explores the American public's confidence in its school system. Despite the endless rhetorical wars waged by critics and defenders of public schools, wars presumably fought for the heart and soul of the American public, research on public attitudes toward education is limited to a handful of texts and papers. This paper seeks to expand upon that literature by pursuing three objectives; first, by drawing on several disciplines to bring together what we know about the public's confidence in the educational system; second, organizing this information in a manner that illuminates the structural features of public confidence in education; three, using this structure to point out areas where additional research on public confidence can fruitfully inform education policy.

Importance of Public Confidence in Education

Declining public confidence has long served as a catalyst for educational reform. In the past twenty years, educational reformers have responded enthusiastically to anxieties that American education is failing. Whatever it is reformers have attempted to accomplish, however, public opinion polls indicate that they have not restored faith in the nation's educational system. As we enter the second half of the 1990s, public schools suffer continued loss of esteem with the American people. According to Gallup Poll data, the educational system commanded less confidence in the first half of the 1990s than in most of the 1980s, and the same is true if you compare the entire decade of the 1980s with the 1970s. A persistent trend now stretches ominously across three decades. More than a temporary lapse in the public mood is at hand.

Should we be concerned? What if the educational system's fundamental legitimacy--that is, the society's abiding faith, even without empirical confirmation, that schools continue to achieve valuable social goals--has been undermined to the point of irretrievability? The consequences could be serious. American education is intimately connected with other important institutions: the family, the economy, our civic, social, and political structures. The devaluation of this influential institution could profoundly disquiet society's other arrangements for social interaction. History teaches that a society's wavering belief in its bedrock institutions may serve

as an early warning system, a sign, like the coal miner's parakeet, of incipient threats to the larger order (Schama 1989; Andrain 1994).

Conjuring up an apocalypse is not necessary, however, to justify concern. For those of us who care deeply about how education might be improved, another troubling aspect to all of this is that the steep drop in confidence occurred during one of the most reform-driven periods in the history of American education, a time when reforms issued from every pore of government, engaged nearly every major educational actor, and consumed vast amounts of public resources. It is reasonable to claim that no institution, save the military during wartime, has received so much concerted attention from a nation and its leaders. We did not, this time, fiddle while Rome burned. Failure to restore public confidence in education thus calls into question our capacity to shape our collective destiny, to respond forcefully and effectively to future cases of institutional disrepair. School reform is not just another example of politicians feigning a substantive policy response to a complex public problem. In the case of education, governments have acted again and again to change important elements of schooling. The public is unimpressed.

Two Dimensions of Public Confidence

Examining public confidence in one of society's most important institutions necessitates a brief tour over the rugged

scholarly terrain of institutional legitimacy. Social arrangements are institutionalized when their existence is taken for granted; they achieve legitimacy when the justifications for their existence are also taken for granted. As one explanation declares, legitimacy exists when an institution exhibits "the ability to withstand challenges based on instrumental grounds" (Davis, et al. 1994, p. 551). Institutional legitimacy undergirds structures as expansive as the legal foundations of nation-states (Tyler 1990) and as parochial as the norms of a group of British working-class youths (Willis 1981).

Max Weber linked the sources of legitimacy to the foundations of social authority. Tradition, charisma, and legal rationality fix the terms under which those who hold authority and those who are subjected to it interact (Weber 1946). Of special interest is the process of legitimation, how people come to recognize authority as justified. Social scientists have fleshed out the legitimation process by scrutinizing a wide range of social structures [i.e., social stratification (Della Fave 1986), the scientific-technical foundations of law (Stryker 1994), the professions (Abbott 1988)] and a broad set of organizations [i.e., art museums (DiMaggio 1991), conglomerate firms (Davis, et al. 1994), and voluntary social service organization (Singh, et al. 1991)].

Although these researchers have made great strides in building and testing legitimacy theory, education's current precariousness requires explanations of how institutional

delegitimation occurs, or at least of how legitimacy crises arise. Freidrichs' (1980) accounting of the birth and development of legitimacy crises is both succinct and persuasive. He presents three interlocking dimensions of legitimacy--perceptual, behavioral, and structural--to illustrate the life course of a legitimacy crisis. Although the structural dimension falls outside the scope of this inquiry, the perceptual and behavioral dimensions focus on the activities of this paper's principal subject--the public--and can be adapted slightly to assist in this paper's labors. The perceptual dimension consists of citizens' perceptions of institutions and the attitudes formed from these perceptions. The behavioral dimension enumerates what citizens actually do based on these perceptions. The two dimensions provide a template for interpreting the evidence on public confidence in education; data will be presented illustrating how the public perceives and behaves toward the educational system.

When I began this research, I hoped to answer one overarching question--where does the educational system stand with the American people? I am now convinced that the question cannot be answered with great confidence, that the available evidence is fragmentary and contradictory. I also believe that much of the confusion about the public's posture towards schools, and hence the capacity of both public school critics and defenders to claim public backing, is due to a fundamental conceptual problem. The question of where the public stands

presumes clarity on how the public stands with the educational system. In other words, what do we mean by public confidence in the educational system?

I began to focus on this question after noticing a curious paradox in comparing data on education's perceptual and behavioral dimensions. Unlike Friedrichs' mutually reinforcing dimensions, the perceptual and behavioral dimensions of education's legitimacy are diametrically opposed. People say they don't have confidence in schools but they continue to act as if they do, a paradox commanding the attention of this paper. Only by plumbing the depths of this paradox, by uncovering and analyzing fundamental contradictions in the public's relationship with the school system, can we hope to gain a greater understanding of education's institutional stature. Instead of now allowing the argument to outrun the presentation of the evidence, however, let me briefly outline how the paper is organized.

Organization of the Paper

The paper consists of four parts, including this introduction. The second section presents the perceptual dimension, how the public views its schools as expressed in polling data. The third section of the paper examines the behavioral dimension of public confidence, investigating how important actors behave as they interact with the school system. The final section summarizes the paper's argument and discusses

what the findings mean for educational research and educational policy.

Public Confidence in Education: The Perceptual Dimension

This section of the paper examines the perceptual dimension of public confidence in the U.S. school system, how Americans view their schools and the opinions they form from these impressions. According to public opinion polls, public confidence in the school system declined significantly from 1973 to 1993. The four reasons most often given for the decline are: demographic change, the system's poor performance as measured by test scores, popular discontent with government and other institutions, and negative depictions of schools in the media and popular culture.

Demographic Change

As shown in Table I, confidence in public schools fell from 1973-1993 (figures are from Gallup Polls). During this period, the percentage of the public expressing either a lot of confidence or great confidence in public schools shrank by about a third, from 58% to 39%. The sharpest decline occurred in the years leading up to 1983.

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Place Table I About Here

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In the mid-80s, analysts pointed to demographic reasons for the loss of trust in the schools (Elam 1984). With the tail end of the post-World War II baby boom graduating from high school, the percentage of the U.S. population 5-17 years of age had also fallen dramatically (24.1% in 1974 and 19.3% in 1983, as reported by the U.S. Department of Education 1993). Fewer school age children, analysts argued, reduced the public's personal interest in education and provided fewer opportunities for the public to interact with schools, leading to the lower polling numbers.

The picture emerging after 1983 is less supportive of the demographic explanation, however. From 1983-1993, the school-age proportion of the population stabilized (falling slightly from 19.3% to 18.2%), but support for schools rebounded strongly between 1983 to 1987 before again resuming a downward trend into the 1990s. The dismal 39% confidence level of 1983, the year of A Nation at Risk's release, was registered again in 1993. Although perhaps explaining some of the confidence loss before 1983, oscillations in the proportion of the school age population do not appear to help explain later shifts in public opinion.

Declining Performance Indicators

An obvious candidate for producing the loss of faith in the school system is declining school performance. The most widely reported educational indicator in the United States is the average SAT score. Declining SAT scores were a central concern of A Nation at Risk, the 1983 report that mobilized critics of

American schools. Despite the fact that the SAT was designed to predict success in college, not to measure academic achievement, the test commands national attention when it comes to evaluating the educational system. The following examination does not endorse such use but wishes to compare trends in SAT scores and public attitudes towards the school system.[1]

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Place Figure I About Here

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Figure I illustrates the poll results presented earlier, showing three distinct waves of public confidence in the public school system: eroding confidence levels in the 1970s and early 1980s, an upward move starting in the mid-1980s and ending around 1987, and a resumption of decline from 1987 into the 1990s. Figure II shows a remarkably similar pattern for SAT scores, mirroring the three waves of public confidence in education.

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Place Figure II About Here

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This configuration is consistent with the hypothesis that SAT scores sway public opinion, and a plausible case can be made that public discontent with the educational system is in response to evidence of poor institutional performance. One problem with testing this hypothesis is separating out the effect of SAT

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[1] Koretz (1994) provides an excellent review and critique of recent interpretations of trends in SAT scores.

scores on public attitudes from the context in which the scores are reported. If disappointing scores are released under newspaper headlines spotlighting school failure or if improving scores are released by educational official taking credit for success, the cause of subsequent public opinion shifts is difficult to determine. This is the classic problem of untangling medium and message, whether the scores' presentation or the scores themselves affect people's attitudes. As noted earlier, this problem is further compounded by the SAT's dubious validity as an indicator of institutional performance.

Discontent with Government and Other Modern Institutions

Schools were not alone in losing public trust during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. We can see in Figure III that other institutions exhibit a three-wave pattern similar to that of schools (two year running averages have been plotted to smooth the data). Political observers have pointed out that cynicism in government intensified during the 1970s, abated somewhat in the 1980s, and reasserted itself in the 1990s (Dionne 1991). Bogler (1993), in fact, attributes the declining confidence in public institutions, and especially institutions of higher education, to their growing affiliation with government, mainly the federal government. Bogler characterizes contemporary pessimism as a disease that originated with large government bureaucracies in Washington D.C. and spread to other institutions.

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Place Figure III About Here

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Figure III demonstrates, however, that this pathology (to continue the metaphor) also infected institutions somewhat removed from the federal government. Organized religion and big business experienced a comparable three-wave trend of declining public confidence during the same interval. Bogler's thesis also is weakened by the fact that not all federal institutions were affected in the same manner. Confidence in the military, a much maligned public sector institution after the Vietnam War, departed from the prevailing pattern in 1987 and continued to rise steadily into the mid-1990s.

Well known events surely explain some of the military's uniqueness. The very public and effective display of power in Grenada (1983), Libya (1986), Panama (1989), and the Persian Gulf (1991) no doubt served to boost the military's standing with the American public. But the point should not be minimized. Contrary to the thesis of governmental affiliation undermining institutional strength, the military is one public institution that managed to garner additional faith at a time when even private sector institutions were losing theirs.

The idea that the public's confidence in education is influenced by changing sentiments towards institutions in general accords with research concerning the formation of public opinion on major political issues (Stimson 1991). After combing through

decades of polls on major political issues, Stimson found that public opinion shifts globally instead of charting a separate course on each issue. Such global shifts define grand epochs in American political history, times of liberal or conservative dominance of the political scene (Schlesinger 1986). As applied here, the idea is that the public does not sit in judgement on the individual performance of various institutions but attends to a latent, undifferentiated disposition on public matters, forming what is commonly referred to as the "public mood".[2]

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Place Table II About Here

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Table II shows the correlation coefficients of annual public confidence ratings for several institutions and the ratings for confidence in education. One first notices the exceptional strength of the relationships, confirming the suggestion of parallel institutional evaluations deduced from Figure III. Except for the military (-.18) and the Supreme Court (+.17), confidence in education tends to follow confidence in other institutions. Confidence ratings for Congress and television are highly related with education's (both +.86), and five other institutions show moderately strong correlations. Confidence in education runs with the herd, and the herd seems to hold

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[2] For a different take on the formation of mass opinion on political issues, see Page and Shapiro (1992). They argue that the public often breaks down issues into separate parts and renders separate judgments on each question.

undifferentiated sentiment towards governmental and private sector institutions.

Ironically, education was once considered an institution immune from the vicissitudes of public skepticism, just as the military is today. In the 1970s, when a spate of books fretted about the loss of confidence in public institutions, schools were held up as an institution bucking the general trend and maintaining strong public faith (Yankelovich 1972; Lipset and Schneider 1983). In a statement that would be greeted with disbelief today, George Gallup remarked in 1974, "The public schools represent one of the two or three American institutions which have held the respect and confidence of a majority of citizens in a period of widespread cynicism and disillusionment" (cited in Elam 1984, p. 4). At the time, the national crisis in confidence was attributed to widespread alienation in response to Vietnam and Watergate. Confidence in political institutions--the presidency, the Congress, and the Supreme Court--had plummeted to post-war lows (Lipset and Schneider 1983).

Analysts argued that confidence in institutions should be decomposed into two parts--confidence in the institutions themselves and confidence in the leaders of institutions. In *The Confidence Gap*, Lipset and Schneider (1983) disaggregate polling data to argue that the 1970s crisis was a nationwide rejection of inept and corrupt leaders. People were at fault, not institutions, and since education lacked identifiable national

leaders (and continues to do so), schools were an institution escaping public disdain.

This raises an interesting point concerning education's contemporary crisis. Similar disaggregations of public opinion on political institutions in the 1990s show a reversal in perceived culprits. The public now often blames "the system" rather than individual leaders in the system. A July, 1993 *Gallup Poll Monthly* article on Congress and the Presidency carries the title, "Public Gives Politics Mixed Reviews: Negative on Institutions, Positive on Individuals" (Gallup and Moore 1993, p. 24). Finding fault in institutions rather than individuals casts a broader net of public skepticism, one that might now catch education in its grasp.

Nevertheless, the ratings presented in these tables and figures are remarkably similar, and notwithstanding the military's popularity and education's lack of national leaders, the simultaneous rise and fall of confidence in vastly dissimilar organizations suggests the existence of suprainstitutional influences on the public mood. Forces beyond the institutions themselves--transcendent to their individual leaders, records of performance, or modes of organization--may affect how they are viewed by the public.

One such factor could be growing doubt about the virtues of modernity, a pervasive conviction that modern institutions have grown too large and too cumbersome--and out of touch with constituents' needs. Distrust of the enormous size and

complexity of modern institutions could explain the weakening public confidence in both public and private institutions. Unless presented with compelling information to the contrary, such as bold military strikes and swift victories, we may form judgments about prominent institutions by lumping them together into an overall estimation of how society is functioning.

Another potential cause for growing distrust of institutions can be found in declining rates of participation in what Robert Putnam refers to as "networks of civic engagement" (Putnam 1994). A wide range of organizations facilitating civic and social association have experienced dwindling membership in recent decades--labor unions, religious groups, fraternal clubs. Even bowling leagues, Putnam points out, have fallen on hard times while the amount of bowling has actually increased, a clever illustration of the nation's growing individualism. If the informal civil associations buttressing our public institutions are indeed weakening, few of society's formal institutions will be left unaffected.

Suprainstitutional influences need not be negative, of course, and they could stretch back in history, establishing both a floor and a ceiling for public sentiments. By fluctuating within tolerable limits, enough public support may be generated to keep fundamental institutions afloat and just enough disenchantment to motivate institutional reform. Many of the institutions that polls currently show with low public standing--Congress, the Presidency, big business, and the public

schools--have endured periods in history when their very survival was in doubt. Such perseverance is a reminder that no objective benchmark exists to confirm when public confidence has fallen far enough to constitute a true institutional crisis. Indeed, the polling trends examined in this paper may trace part of a natural cycle of public favor and disfavor that has been going on for a century or longer. If so, education's crisis in public confidence may be no crisis at all, simply the figment of academics' musings and media hyperbole.

Depictions of Education in the Media and Popular Culture

Whether guilty of hyperbole or not, the media certainly covers education as if it is an institution in crisis, and coverage expanded during the 1980s. As George Kaplan points out, "the quantity and volume of education reporting rose steadily, if slowly, in the 1980s and into the 1990s, notably since 1987" (Kaplan 1992, p. 131). Although the media's influence in public affairs is well documented, whether media coverage shapes or merely reflects public perceptions is a point of dispute. In his landmark study of agenda setting, Kingdon (1984) describes the press as more a follower of public opinion than a leader. In contrast, a 1994 study of the public's response to the issue of crime supports the notion of media causality, the idea that public attitudes are constructed through attention to authoritative cultural cues, including those conveyed by the media (Beckett 1994). Beckett's research finds that two

factors--media coverage of street crime and state initiatives addressing crime--are significant predictors of the public's perception of crime as a serious problem, exceeding the predictive capacity of the crime rate itself. Issues possess a saliency distinguishable from that of institutions, however. It is unclear whether these findings can be extrapolated to the judgment of institutions or even to issues--like those found in the field of education--lacking crime's dramatic punch.

Thomsen (1993) argues that falling public confidence in schools during the 1980s was influenced by the manner in which education was portrayed by popular films. The commonality of plots at that time is striking. Typically, an alienated, heroic teacher struggles against burned-out colleagues and malevolent, dishonest, and incompetent administrators--e.g., *Teachers* (1984), *Lean on Me* (1988), *Stand and Deliver* (1988), and *Dead Poet's Society* (1989). Eschewing the subtleties and complexities of the educative enterprise, these films dress their characters in black and white hats. Anything that smacks of education as a system of professionals is rotten to the core. The most popular of these films, *Dead Poet's Society*, is particularly emphatic that good teaching has little to do with informed judgment, technical competence, or specialized training, but hinges instead on noble intentions and messianic impulses.

To argue that these movies, as popular as they are, have significantly contributed to the public's negative view of schools encounters several obstacles, however. The same

difficulty with evaluating the impact of media coverage applies here--of untangling cause and effect. Moreover, even in eras when the public supposedly championed educational institutions, cinema embraced the motif of the alienated teacher-hero and victimized students who are pitted against an abusive and corrupt school system.

A French film, Jean Vigo's brilliant *Zero de conduite (Zero for Conduct)*, probably launched the genre in 1933. The story unfolds at a residential school for boys. Life at the school is dominated by its principal, a diminutive man embodying the most callous ways in which school bureaucrats attain order: brutally enforcing strict rules of conduct over both students and staff, presiding at elaborately decorative but unceasingly dull ceremonies, stifling the natural individuality and creativity of children, humiliating all who oppose him. The students win the sympathies of a young, idealistic teacher, but life at the school is harsh. Relief comes only at night as the children prepare for bed in the dormitory, a sanctuary where playfulness and freedom prevail. The plot builds to a climax as one young student organizes and leads his companions in rebellion against the oppressive order.

That this basic story, students seizing control of their school, has been replicated in British and American settings vouches for its universal appeal [see, for instance, *If...* (1969), and *Taps* (1981)], and every generation of moviegoers has had its dedicated teachers who go against the grain for their

students' benefit [e.g., *Goodbye Mr. Chips* (1939), *How Green Was My Valley* (1941), *The Corn is Green* (1946), *Up the Down Staircase* (1967), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969), *Conrack* (1974)]. In these films, schools and school systems appear either as active opponents of idealized characters or as drab stages on which teachers' heroics are performed. Heroism thrives on individuality. But the technical operations of collectivities, and especially the routine activities of complex organizations, do not easily arouse an audience's sympathies; hospitals, churches, and government bureaucracies also fare poorly in the movies. Rather than molding our attitudes towards these institutions, however, popular films probably tap existing anxieties about the nature of formal institutional settings.

Eroding Confidence in Schools or School Systems?

Defenders of public education question whether schools are as bereft of public confidence as the polls seem to indicate. They make a case similar to the earlier distinction between the public's opinion of leaders of institutions and the public's opinion of institutions themselves, this time dividing confidence in education into two types: confidence in local schools and confidence in the national system. If public disenchantment focuses on the educational system rather than local schools, then individual teachers and school principals may continue to win for schools the esteem that has been lost by the system as a whole.

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Place Figure IV About Here

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Figure IV illustrates this argument by plotting the letter grades that the public gave to local schools and to the nation's schools from 1983 to 1993 in the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll, in this case the percentage of respondents granting a letter grade of A or B.[3] As shown, the public definitely views its local schools more favorably than the nation's schools. Furthermore, the two slopes track each other closely from 1983-1987, as consecutive polls show more favorable assessments of local and national schools, but they diverge after 1987. From 1987 to 1993, local schools made slight gains in confidence, with favorable ratings growing from 43% to 47%, while the same ratings for the nation's schools slipped from 26% to 19%. Generally speaking, the local-national gap in confidence held steady at about 16% in the middle 1980s and then grew to over 25% from the late 1980s to the early 1990s.

Data like these have fueled a fierce battle in educational journals concerning the accuracy of the public's perception of the educational system's performance. An analysis of the Gallup figures in *The Executive Educator* draws the conclusion, "The poll makes no secret of the fact that the more familiar people are with schools, the higher their opinion of school quality" (Cannon

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[3] Comparisons of national and local ratings can only be made after 1981 since that is when the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll began asking for both evaluations.

and Barham 1993, p. 41). Although not exhibited in these graphs, the responses of parents with children in school provide additional support for this interpretation. Parents consistently give higher ratings to their children's schools than the general public's rating, and parents give the school their oldest child attends even higher ratings yet (Elam 1993; Elam 1994).

The fact that local schools receive higher grades than the nation's schools may mean the more schools are known, the better they appear. We don't know for sure, however, whether the public possesses more information on local schools or schools nationwide. We also don't know very much about the integrity of parental assessments of school performance. Parents have a personal stake in their children's schools that may hinder giving a disinterested appraisal of school performance.

Critics of American schools agree that parents are satisfied with schools, but believe the satisfaction is unwarranted. Stevenson and Stigler, for instance, compare American and Japanese mothers' evaluations of their children's schools and find American mothers significantly more contented with their children's education, even though the American children scored far below Japanese students on almost every test of learning that the researchers administered. Japanese mothers, despite their children's superior academic accomplishments, were more likely to express dissatisfaction with their children's schooling, blaming the schools and the children themselves for what they considered to be poor performance (Stevenson and Stigler 1992).

Even more astonishing is Cannell's 1987 study showing that every state in the union and approximately 80% of the nation's school districts report that their students are scoring above the national average on standardized tests. Cannell dubs the phenomenon the "Lake Wobegon Effect," referring to Garrison Keeler's mythical place "where all the children are above average". This finding bolsters the idea that American parents, swayed by educators' reports of glowing test results, are viewing the schools through rose colored glasses (Cannell 1987).

Unfortunately, the central argument of this endless controversy--whether schools are doing a good job--clouds the issue of what the public is judging when it judges its schools. Both sides think these polls prove that someone is getting duped, either ignorantly blissful parents or a cynical public at large. Lost are the reasonable notions that: 1) an evaluation of the educational system as a whole is rendered when asked to grade the nation's schools, 2) an evaluation of teachers, principals, and students is given when asked to grade local schools, and 3) these system-level and school-level judgments are decided using independent criteria.

Reconsidering the polling data with these distinctions in mind, the third wave of the decline in public confidence occurring from 1987 to 1993 may indicate eroding faith in the educational system as a whole, but not necessarily in individual schools. As an entity to be judged by the public, the educational system is much more than the sum of its parts.

School systems, whether they are thought of as national, state, or district organizations, manifest characteristics conceptually distinct from the characteristics of schools. The fact that they are judged differently is because they <u>are</u> different. Anyone who has worked in schools or educational bureaucracies will not find this point very shocking, but it often gets lost in interpretations of public confidence in education. I will return to this topic in the final section of the paper, after examining the behavioral dimension of public confidence in education.

Confidence in Education: The Behavioral Dimension

We have seen that polls paint a bleak picture of falling public confidence in the nation's school system. This section examines how actors in crucial relationships with the school system actually behave. The question now under consideration: does the public's disenchantment manifest in its interactions with the educational system? Let us turn to three key actors--students, parents, and governments--and examine behaviors that might convey their level of confidence in the educational system. In stark opposition to the polling data, this perspective grants an optimistic view of confidence in the educational system.

Students Dropping Out of School

Of all the ways students can signal their unhappiness with the school system, dropping out is the most public, the most dramatic, and the most consequential--for both the school and the

student. Politicians ranging from governors to school board members regularly monitor dropout statistics, sometimes even making these figures an issue in election campaigns. By dropping out, students turn thumbs down on the values underlying formal education and the basic activities that make up schooling. Dropping out often represents choosing the belief system of one institution (the family) over that of another (the school). Referring to families with dropout children, a 1995 study concludes; "From the families' perspective, schools are unpleasant, oppressive, unfair, and biased; what they offer is of little social or economic value, and their rules and regulations are impossible. School stands as a public rebuke to everything they do and are. Dropping out makes sense" (Okey and Cusik 1995, p. 264).

Table III displays dropout data collected by the Bureau of the Census from 1967 to 1989. During this period, dropouts declined from 17.0% to 12.6% of sixteen to twenty-four year olds. After bottoming at 12.1% in 1986, the rate ticked up slightly. For the entire period, improvement has occurred among males and females and blacks and whites, but the rate among hispanics remains over 30%, after falling to 27.6% in 1985.[4]

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Place Table III About Here

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[4]The hispanic dropout rate is difficult to interpret since the figure includes immigrants ages 16-24 who arrived in the U.S. without a high school diploma and never attended U.S. schools.

As with SAT scores, we see a widely reported output of the educational system improving in the mid-1980s and slipping thereafter. Disappointment with the truncated progress of the dropout rate may have contributed to the downturn in public opinion after 1987, but for this part of the paper it will be profitable to concentrate on the dropout rate as a dependent variable, to think about dropping out as a decision influenced by the confidence that schools inspire. To do this, we should concentrate on reasons for the long term improvement in the dropout rate. Why are today's young people more likely to stay in school than they were in the past?

There is a widespread conviction that American society's belief in education worked to keep reluctant youth of the past in school, even beyond the compulsory age of sixteen enforced by most states. If true, this influence may be more powerful now than ever; the dropout rate is near an historical low. Despite everything we hear about social breakdown among the young, the press to attend school continues to outweigh the lure of the streets. Other factors also probably enter the calculus of dropping out. Attractive alternatives available a generation ago--early marriage and employment--could no longer appear as attractive. In addition, the numerous programs tackling the dropout problem, in particular programs offering day care for young mothers, may be reaping their intended results. In 1967, females were more likely to drop out of school; in 1989 males were more likely to do so.

Students were about one-fourth less likely to drop out of school in 1989 than they were in 1967. Again, there is the hint of a possible trend reversal in these numbers around 1986, but taken as a whole, the dropout statistics for 1967 to 1989 do not support theories of institutional decay. If students have lost confidence in the school system, they are not acting like it.

Parents Choosing Private Schools

For parents who can afford it, private school is an alternative to public education. Were the public school system falling into ruin, one would expect a surge in private school enrollment. Table IV shows the private school proportion of elementary and secondary enrollment (K-12) throughout the twentieth century. In the competition for students, private schools steadily increased their share during the first half of the century, peaking in 1959 at 13.6%.

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Figure V gives a close up look at private school enrollment after the peak, from 1960-1992. The private school share of enrollment has stayed within a narrow range, from about 9% to 13%. The low point was reached in 1972, with just under 10% of enrollment, followed by slow growth until 1983 (12.7%). From 1983 into the 1990s the private school share of enrollment eased back to about 11% (11.2% in 1992).

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Place Figure V About Here

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Those who argue that schools have lost the public's faith often conveniently point to the 1972-1983 growth in private school attendance as evidence supporting their case. Thomas Toch, for instance, in his popular 1991 book *In the Name of Excellence* describes the time period this way: "Public education, meanwhile, was hemorrhaging students to private education. In 1976 private schools educated 7.6 percent of the nation's elementary and secondary students; by 1983, they claimed 12.6 percent of the student population..." (Toch 1991, p. 9)

Surely, the falling confidence in public schools during this time period precipitated some student transfers from public to private schools, but the actual increase of less than 3 percent in private school share during this time period hardly suggests a hemorrhaging of public school rolls[5]. In fact, since 1983 the private school share of students has declined, and since their halcyon days in the 1950s, private schools have lost a significant percentage of enrollment to the public schools, not the other way around.

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[5] Toch overestimates private schools' enrollment gain because his 1976 statistic (7.6 percent) is too low. According to enrollment data in Table 3 of the *Digest of Educational Statistics*, the private school share was about 10.4 percent in 1976, growing to 12.7 percent in 1983. In fact, the private school share of enrollment has not been as low as Toch's reported level of 7.6 percent since World War I (U.S. Department of Education 1993).

Because the prevailing trend holds during periods of economic expansion and retraction, fluctuations in families' capacity to purchase private schooling does not appear to be a major factor in the public-private distribution of students. A more likely explanation is that religious institutions, the backbone of private schooling in the United States, have found it increasingly burdensome financially to operate schools (Bryk, Lee, and Holland 1993). Catholic schools have been especially hard hit, decreasing from 12,893 schools in 1960 to 8,587 schools in 1990 (U.S. Department of Education 1993). The location of many Catholic schools in urban centers that experienced middle class flight and the softening of community norms that once supported religious-based instruction probably contributed to the shrinking demand for parochial schools. Public schools, with organized political interests to defend them from threat of closure, are better positioned to cope with such forces.

We should not discount public-private enrollment figures as an authoritative gauge of the competition for students, however. Because of a vastly improved standard of living, more parents at the end of the twentieth century can afford to choose between private and public schooling than at the beginning of the century. They are choosing public schools. Enrollment figures do not support the assertion that public schools have lost the confidence of American parents.

Governments Providing Financial Support

Turning to governments, if confidence in the educational system were in fact declining one would also expect school revenues to decline. This has not been the case. Figure VI shows, despite the impression given by vociferous public school advocates, that constant dollar per pupil expenditures grew significantly from 1970 to 1991. Few public sector policy areas can match education's 62% increase in inflation-adjusted governmental funding from 1970-1991 ($3,538 to $5,748 per pupil ADA in 1990-1991 dollars). Although the flattening out of revenue from 1978 to 1982 could have been related to falling public confidence (the rate of acceleration also appears to falter in 1990-1991), the sensitivity of state and local coffers to economic slowdowns in these two periods is probably the culprit.

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Place Figure VI About Here

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Figure VI vividly illustrates that education remains a high priority for governmental support regardless of the poll readings on public confidence. What explains the anomaly of a rising commitment of public funds while readings of public confidence are falling? Interestingly, in contrast to the polls on public confidence in education, polls taken since World War II also show consistent public support for additional spending on education (Page and Shapiro 1992). That spending on public schools

continued to rise throughout the 1970s, in the face of a sharp fall off in public confidence, is therefore not as mysterious as it appears on first blush. Education remains highly valued in American culture, and the belief that more money can help solve the school system's problems is quite resilient. It is within reason for one to consider the educational system deeply flawed and still support increased funding--as a way to remedy the situation.

The composition of governmental funding has also changed dramatically since 1970, with state governments assuming a large percentage of the funding burden from local revenue sources (Wong 1989). When state budgets are contested in legislatures, the enormous political power of teachers unions is marshalled in support of increased funding. Observers of state legislatures routinely describe teachers unions as one of the most powerful lobbies, if not the most powerful, in the crafting of state budgets (Mazzoni 1995). The financial support that governments have generously provided education may be more testimony to political muscle than a vote of confidence in public schools.

Still the fact remains that democratically elected leaders must make hard choices about how to spend the public purse. American society is not without other pressing problems, and other organized interests fight to receive governmental attention. And yet, political leaders financially support public education with unprecedented fidelity. If confidence in

education is languishing, one cannot find substantiating evidence in levels of government funding.

This section of the paper does not simplify the puzzle of the public's confidence in education. The prior section presented polling data that told a story of deteriorating public faith in the schools. Now we have examined data showing emphatically that education's most important actors--students, parents, and governments--behave as if they are dealing with an institution in exquisite health. Historically large percentages of students are staying in school, parents in increasing numbers choose public schools over private schools, governments allocate scarce public revenues to schools far in excess of inflationary pressures. The public's confidence in education appears sound everywhere except for the places where perceptions of public confidence are sampled and recorded--in public opinion polls.

By spotlighting tensions in the public's confidence in education, these contradictions identify important features of the relationship of the American people and their system of public schooling. This relationship serves as the featured topic of the paper's concluding discussion.

Summary and Discussion

The inconsistencies in the data just examined stimulate numerous questions, but two in particular will help illuminate the structure of public confidence in education. First, can the

contradictory nature of the public's perceptions and behaviors be reconciled? Second, peering a little more deeply into the perceptual dimension, why the apparent discrepancy in attitudes toward local schools and the nation's schools as a whole? These two questions will frame the remainder of the paper and help elucidate the aspects of public confidence in need of additional research. Finally, the implications of these findings for educational policy will be presented.

The Contradiction of Perceptions and Behaviors

When responding to polls, the public sounds like it is losing confidence in schools, but it doesn't act like it when interacting with the school system. What's going on? One way of thinking about this discrepancy postulates a sequential process of institutional delegitimation, a temporal connection between the perceptual and behavioral dimensions. Imagine an institution in decline. We would expect negative perceptions to form--the belief that the institution is inefficient, unfair, or misdirected in its goals--before delegitimation actually manifests in behavioral displays of public alienation.

The perceptual dimension may therefore only reflect a single stage in an ongoing deterioration of public confidence in the school system. If so, sinking polls portend future trouble in the behavioral dimension--rising dropout rates, reductions in public funding for education, flight to private schools. A more benign interpretation would conclude that there is obviously

quite a bit of slack in the process, that we have until the behavioral indicators turn down to reverse the trend. An even more optimistic conclusion is that the perceptual and behavioral dimensions are unconnected. People may complain about the school system's imperfections, but when it comes time to act, their faith in public schools remains deep and unshakable.

Unfortunately, the current knowledge base is inadequate to weigh the relative merits of these hypotheses. We need to know more about events occurring between and within the perceptual and behavioral dimensions--the interplay of the perceptions and behaviors discussed here, how public perceptions of the school system are formed, and how these perceptions are related to such crucial decisions as dropping out of school. Reliable polling data need to be gathered at the state and local systems level so that comparisons can be made across political jurisdictions. Currently only national polls like Gallup provide reliable information over an extended period of time. We know, for instance, that when compared to their suburban counterparts, inner-city residents express less confidence in their public schools. Urban schools also exhibit higher dropout rates and lose a larger proportion of their students to private schools. With reliable perceptual and behavioral data from various urban systems, meaningful comparisons could be made of failing urban systems and those urban systems that are successfully shoring up and restoring their schools' public confidence.

We need to find out even more at a lower level of analysis, at the level of the individual. A vast political science literature has been founded on the analysis of the individual as rational decision-maker. This line of inquiry has produced insights into such diverse subfields as electoral politics, international relations, and the study of legislatures. There is no comparable body of theoretical or empirical research in the field of education (Boyd, Crowson, and van Geel 1995).

Think about the different experiences of the two main subjects in this analysis--poll respondents and actors within the school system. When asked to grade the nation's schools, poll respondents undoubtedly think of the characteristics of an ideal school and assign grades based on the magnitude of deviation from this model. When one chooses a given course of action, however, the choice is made from an array of real options with real weaknesses, not from competing models. The student's decision to stay in school, the parent's decision to send her child to the public school down the street, the state legislature's decision to increase appropriations for education--these choices must only appear more attractive than the alternatives known to these actors. The threshold of support is lower for the actor than the poll respondent; the poll respondent chooses between an imperfect reality and an ideal.

A similar dynamic occurs when highly touted ideas are actualized in policy initiatives and submitted to the public for approval. For decades, polls have shown broad public support for

parental choice schemes that would allow the use of public funds to attend private schools. When submitted to the voters of Michigan, Oregon, and California, however, choice proposals have been soundly defeated. Ideas have a way of seeming attractive as abstractions but tarnished in the real world.

Thus, perceptions and behaviors that appear contradictory may in fact be consistent given the different contexts in which they are rendered; different contexts can lead to seemingly contradictory decisions from actors who nevertheless maintain stable preferences (Jones 1994). In order to conceptualize the linkages between what people think about schools and how they act toward them, we need to first find out much more about how perceptions of education are formed and educational decisions made.

Divergent Assessments of Local Schools and the Nation's Schools

Recall that I promised in the perceptual dimension part of the paper to return to the provocative divergence of opinion on local and national schools. The public consistently rates its local schools higher than the nation's schools as a whole. Public school advocates claim that this shows that the more people know about schools, the more they like them. Now that we have examined possible bases of the perceptual-behavioral dichotomy, are there alternative explanations that make sense?

I stated in the analysis of polling data that the public probably utilizes different criteria when judging local schools

and the nation's schools. But what criteria? When the public is asked to list local schools' most pressing problems, four responses dominate: drug abuse, violence, lack of discipline, and inadequate financial support (Elam 1994). Although ostensibly attributed to local schools, these problems seem to describe symptoms of social or systemwide failure--the breakdown of basic civic order, the unruliness of youth, the fragile fiscal condition of school systems. Only the concern for more discipline speaks to problems of teaching and learning, and then only tangentially. School-based problems--inadequate textbooks and other curricular materials, poorly trained teachers, dirty and dilapidated buildings, student truancy, too little homework, students who don't do their homework, students showing up at school unfed or in poor health, the need for more computers, calculators, and other technologies, administrative burdens from central office, unsupportive parents--these receive scant notice from the public. Such oversights challenge the assumption that more is known about local schools than schools in general. The educational maladies the public detects are general rather than specific, disconnected from teaching and learning, and blamed on schools in the aggregate rather than on any school in particular. School systems, not schools, are losing the public's trust.

For several years, political analysts have noted the tendency of voters to express distaste for Congress as an institution and, paradoxically, contentment with their own representatives. The most prominent explanation views this

phenomenon as a collective goods problem. Strong incentives exist to criticize Congress as an institution--by candidates who campaign on the promise to "clean up the mess in Washington"--but few corresponding incentives exist to defend the institution. Incumbents either portray themselves as isolated from the evils of Washington or stress the benefits they have obtained for their constituents, accomplishments of the individual office holder instead of the institution.

Polls on other areas of social life show a similar pattern, the so-called "I'm-OK-but-you're-not" syndrome. A study conducted by a large insurance company unearthed a fascinating conundrum: when asked about the state of families, communities, and workplaces, Americans report satisfaction with their own families, communities, and workplaces while simultaneously believing that these institutions are collapsing across the nation (Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company 1994). The health care debate that dominated national politics in 1994 produced a blizzard of puzzling polls. One showed that 63% rated the US health care system as fair or poor and 34% good or excellent, while sentiments were reversed when people rated their own care; 76% said their own health care was good or excellent and only 22% judged it fair or poor (Associated Press, *Boston Globe*, 9/14/94, p. 4). People are inclined to believe that they are conducting their own lives properly, and evaluations of personal social interactions benefit from this inclination. But the institutions that serve as society's incarnations of these

personal interactions become the vessels in which every doubt, disappointment, and complaint are poured.

Does this describe the situation when the public evaluates local schools and the nation's schools? In some ways it does. Parents have an interest in justifying where they send their children to school, of viewing local schools as better than others. Principals and teachers have reason to see their schools as extraordinarily able to accomplish educational objectives. Schools with lots of problems will need more money so taxpayers may exaggerate local schools' success. When praising their neighborhood schools, homeowners might also remember that good schools and high property values go hand in hand. Personal relationships and associations do seem to slant public opinion favorably toward local schools.

In a paper with profound importance for the study of school effects, Bidwell and Kasarda urged analysts to recognize the difference between schools and schooling when conceptualizing educational effects (Bidwell and Kasarda 1980). The point made here is quite similar: that education's connections with the public operate on an individual level through teaching and learning (found in schools) and on a societal level through complex organizational forms (found in national, state, and district school systems).

Public Confidence and the Politics of Reform

The politics of educational reform is dominated by competing parties, all claiming to represent the public will. Although such claims are part and parcel of political conflict, the resolution of representation that is usually attained through elections is rarely achieved in education. Given this ambiguity, how can we strengthen the bonds between the public and the school system? As I have argued in this essay, the problem is both a technical one, the need for better data, and one of inadequate conceptualization of how the public perceives and interacts with educational institutions. Resolving these issues would reap benefits that transcend those offered by the policies of educational reformers and defenders of the status quo.

Take the system-school divergence, for instance. Advocates of all stripes have a stake in reversing people's tendency to disassociate individual schools, which they praise, from the system that the schools embody, which they condemn. School systems, not schools, bear the burden of marshalling the public resources that support the collective educational efforts of our society. These public resources include, obviously, the provision of adequate fiscal support, but also the recruitment and training of competent teachers and administrators, the imposition of educational obligations on parents and their children (e.g., regular attendance, civil behavior), and social recognition of education's value. Educational policy actors--be they liberal or conservative, traditionalist or reformer, critic

or defender of current practices--stand to benefit from greater coherence in the public's view of schools and school systems.

Better guidance to policymakers will surely follow. The 1980s reform movement provides a prime example of confusion surrounding the public's interaction with educational policies. Murphy (1990) describes the different waves of education reform in the 1980s. The first wave, occurring from 1983-1985, responded to A Nation at Risk and other commission reports with policies that intensified what schools already practiced, "raising the bar" through tougher graduation requirements, more challenging courses, and more rigorous tests. During this period, test scores improved and the dropout rate declined. And as we saw in the polling data from this period, the public's perception of education rose sharply.

After this first wave of policymaking, something interesting happened. The thrust of reform shifted from boosting academic achievement to restructuring the organization of schooling, a drive for systemic change that became Wave II of the reform movement. The reform movement seemed to have broken away from its populist roots and relocated inside the system of educational professionals. Wave II reformers asserted that quantitative gains in test scores were purchased at the price of qualitative losses in teaching and learning--too many teacher-centered classrooms focused on test-driven content. Researchers documented the inability of instructional innovations to alter classroom practice (Cohen and Ball 1990). Aligning new tests,

curriculum, and pedagogical practices with preferred student outcomes became the hallmark of Wave II reforms (Smith and O'Day 1991). As Wave II gathered momentum, most of education's performance indicators remained stable, but polls on public confidence began to slide.

What happened? Were public demands to change schools initially satisfied by Wave I reforms and then opposed to Wave II reforms? Perhaps, but not necessarily. The negative turn in public opinion after 1987 might have been a reaction to Wave I as the effect of earlier reforms began to kick in. Maybe the public, growing impatient, wanted more tangible results in return for its unprecedented financial investment in schools during the decade. The regrettable fact is, despite years of public debate and investment of billions of dollars in public revenue, we have no firm understanding of the impact of Wave I or Wave II reforms on the public's evaluation of schools. The data do not exist to explore what caused the simultaneous turn of important statistical measures in 1986-1987 (e.g., public opinion, SAT scores, the dropout rate) so we are left with only speculation about possible causal connections. And moreover, proposals to radically alter the face of schooling continue to come forth without any accompanying information on the public's view of the proposals' merits.

The primary reason for this lack of understanding is the noticeable absence of political feasibility estimates in

educational policymaking.[6] Analysis of educational policy focuses almost exclusively on instrumental outcomes, whether learning objectives are achieved by a particular program, for instance. One of the foremost objectives of policy analysis is to improve institutional performance, and as pointed out by John Meyer and others, noninstrumental outcomes are equally powerful factors in public evaluations of schooling (Meyer, Scott, and Deal 1981).

Anticipating the impact of reform proposals on education's underlying legitimacy therefore falls under the analyst's responsibility for enhancing institutional stewardship. And any thorough analysis of education policy will take into account the structure of public confidence in education's institutional forms. When thinking about public confidence in education or talking about ways to boost education's institutional legitimacy, it is important to recognize the two distinctions outlined here--the difference between the public's faith in schools and school systems and the difference between the perceptual and behavioral manifestations of that faith.

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[6]May (1986) documents the paucity of research on political feasibility and urges a more significant role for feasibility estimates in policymaking.

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Table I

Confidence in Public Schools
Percent saying "great deal" or "quite a lot"
(1973-1993)

1973	58%	1970's Average 55.0%
1975	NA	
1977	54%	
1979	53%	
1981	42%	1980's Average 44.4%
1983	39%	
1985	48%	
1987	50%	
1989	43%	
1991	44%	1990's Average 41.5% (as of 1993)
1993	39%	

Source: The Gallup Poll Monthly, (April/1993), p. 24

Table II

Correlation Coefficients for Public's Yearly Ratings of Confidence in Major Institutions and Confidence in Education
(Gallup Poll 1973-1993)

Institution	Correlation Coefficient
Television	+.86
Congress	+.86
Organized Labor	+.65
Organized Religion	+.62
Banks	+.62
Big Business	+.57
Newspapers	+.47
Supreme Court	+.17
Military	-.18

Source: Author's computations from data in Gallup Poll Monthly, April 1993, p. 24

Table III

Percentage of High School Dropouts
Among Persons 16 to 24 Years old
(1967-1989)

Year	All Persons	Sex		Race/Ethnicity		
		Male	Female	White	Black	Hispanic
1967	17.0	16.5	17.3	15.4	28.6	---
1970	15.0	14.2	15.7	13.2	27.9	---
1975	13.9	13.3	14.5	12.6	22.8	29.2
1980	14.1	15.1	13.1	13.3	19.3	35.2
1981	13.9	15.1	12.8	13.8	18.5	33.1
1982	13.9	14.5	13.3	13.1	18.4	31.7
1983	13.7	14.9	12.5	12.9	18.1	31.5
1984	13.1	14.0	12.3	12.7	15.6	29.8
1985	12.6	13.4	11.8	12.2	15.7	27.6
1986	12.1	12.9	11.3	11.9	13.7	30.0
1987	12.7	13.3	12.2	12.5	14.5	28.6
1988	12.9	13.5	12.2	12.7	14.9	35.8
1989	12.6	13.6	11.7	12.4	13.8	33.0

NOTE: "Status" dropouts are persons who are not enrolled in school and who are not high school graduates. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Dropout Rates in The United States, 1989.

Table IV

Private School Enrollment as Percentage of Total Elementary and Secondary Enrollment
By Decade, 1900-1992

Decade	Private School Enrollment
1900-09	7.6%
1910-19	8.0%
1920-29	8.1%
1930-39	9.4%
1940-49	10.5%
1950-59	13.1%
1960-69	12.6%
1970-79	10.3%
1980-89	12.1%
1990-1992	11.2%

NOTE: Percentage represents the mean of each decade's ten annual percentage figures.
Source: Computed by author from data in Digest of Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, 1993.

Figure I

Confidence in Public Schools
Percent saying "great deal" or "quite a lot"
(1973-1993)

Source: The Gallup Poll Monthly, April 1993, p. 24

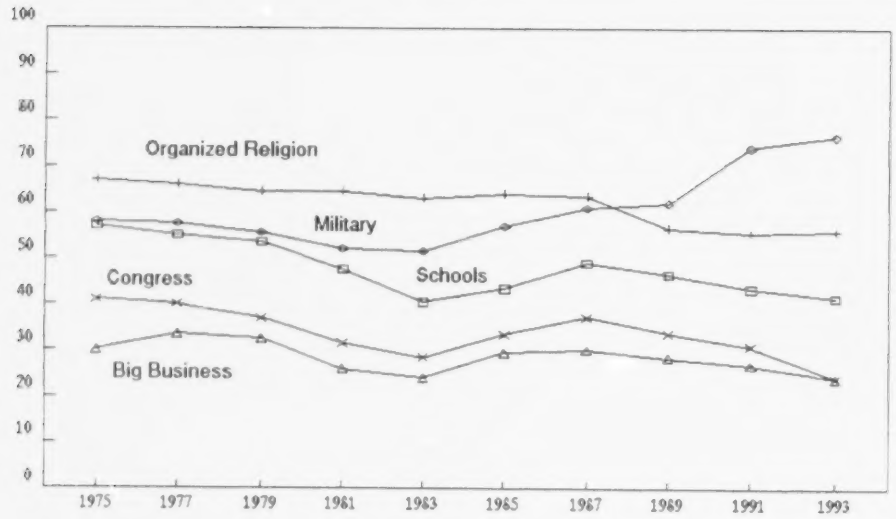
Figure II

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Score Average
(1973-1993)

Source: Digest of Educational Statistics, US Department of Education, 1993

Figure III

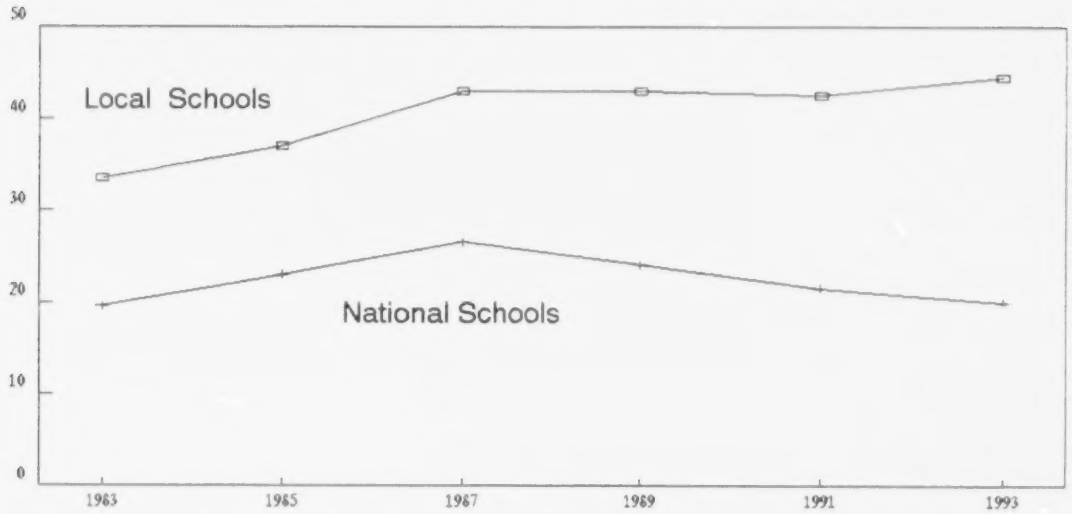
Public Confidence in Major Institutions
(1975-1993)



Source: The Gallup Poll Monthly, April/1993

Figure IV

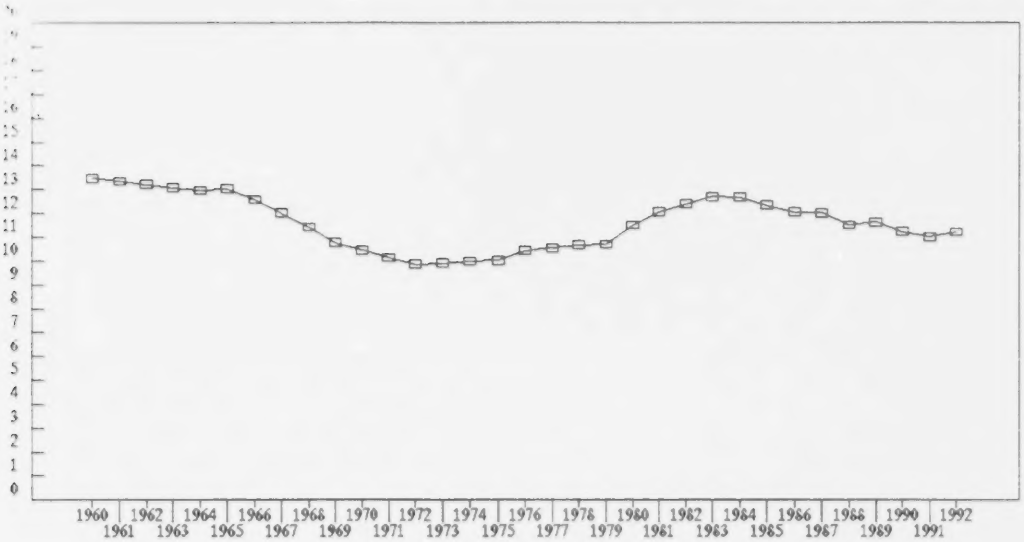
Public Confidence in Local Schools and the Nation's Schools
Percent Giving 'A' or 'B' grade
(1983-1993)



Sources: Compiled from Phi Delta Kappa/ Gallup Poll data cited in Elam (ed.), 1984, p.14 and Elam, et al., 1994, p. 45.

Figure V

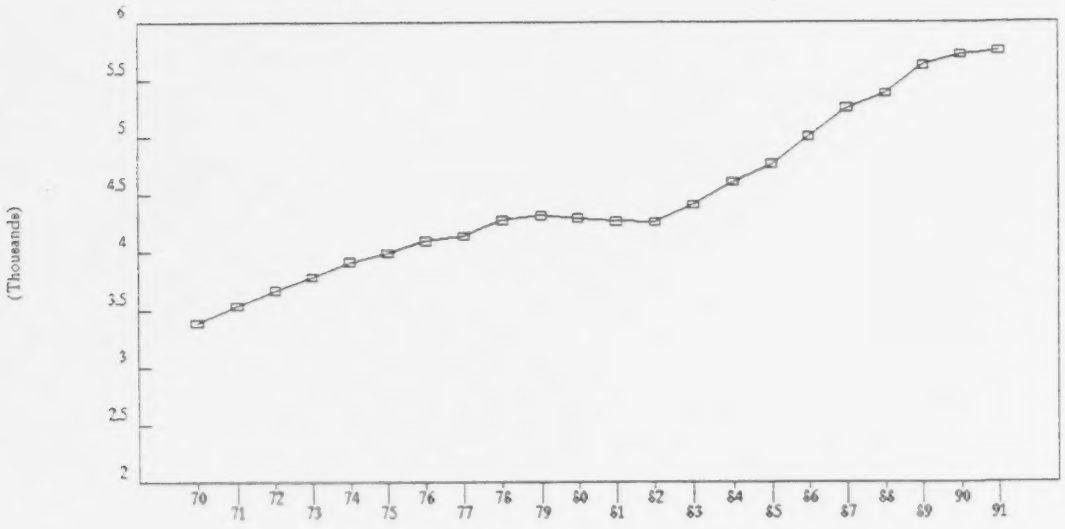
Private School Enrollment as a Percentage of Total U.S. Enrollment
Elementary and Secondary Schools
(1960-1992)



Sources: U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Educational Statistics, 1993, Table 3

Figure VI

Per Pupil Public School Revenues, 1970-1991
(in constant 1990-1991 dollars)



Sources: U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Educational Statistics, 1993

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